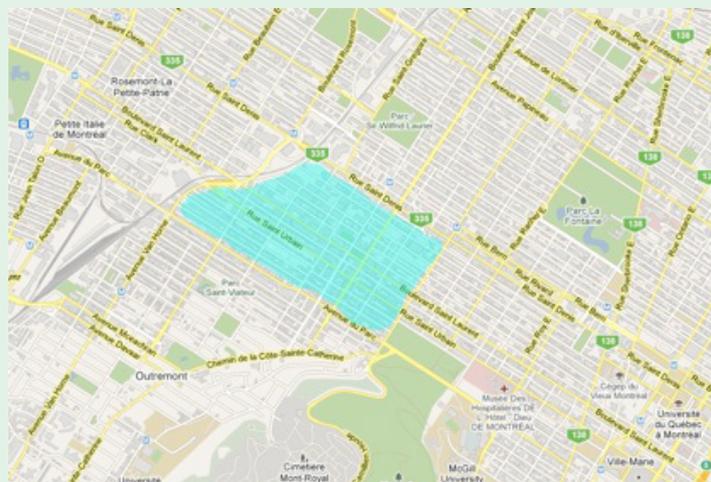


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**MILE-END HIPSTERS  
AND THE UNMASKING  
OF MONTREAL'S  
PROLETAROID  
INTELLIGENTSIA;  
OR HOW A BOHEMIA  
BECOMES BOHO**

DR. GEOFF STAHL  
(VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON, AOTEAROA-NEW ZEALAND)

On a recent trip back to Montreal, a city I left some time ago, it became apparent that a spectre had recently come to haunt the city's imaginary. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the term "hipster" had entered Montreal's urban lexicon, becoming a locus of a certain kind of anxiety. A glance at local print media and on-line sites dedicated to Montreal's cultural life suggested that the "hipster" had cast a pall on the city, notably in relation to one area: Mile-End. This was, in a tangential way, tied to Montreal's recent and modest good fortune. As a way of capturing the cultural textures of this area, and plotting where the hipster fits into its moral geography as modern-day folk devil in Montreal, I want to outline how an epithet such as "hipster" circulates, among what Bourdieu has referred to as the "proletaroid intelligentsia." The amorphous discursive shape of the hipster both reveals and conceals the codes of belonging of Montreal's bohemian subset in ways that foreground its ambiguous function in the city's imaginary. As will be suggested today, the "hipster" brings into focus certain custodial imperatives, as well as foregrounds the social and spatial logic of an earlier entrepreneurial bohemia articulated through its members' ethical claims on the neighbourhood.



The figure of the Montreal hipster emerged out of a set of factors indigenous to the city. Many of these are rooted in developments in Mile-End, an area that spans from Mont Royal in the south, to Van Horne in the north, Parc Avenue in the West, to St. Denis in the East and is an area principally associated with a diverse immigrant population, but which has, according to census data, the highest density of artists per kilometre in North America. Recently, it has become a neighbourhood marked by another entrepreneurial class, primarily established bohemians who have settled in as shop-and homeowners. In this new urban context, the mediated bogey man/woman of the hipster can be linked to what Stanley Cohen (2002) referred to as the "folk devil," that figure upon which are inscribed all the fears and anxieties of a particular community. As Cohen suggests about the Mods and Rockers riots at British seaside resorts in the early sixties, the folk devil functions as an iconic and easily recognizable flash point for larger social issues that may well come to constitute a moral panic. The hipster has become a contemporary analogue to the Mods and Rockers, albeit drained of the threat of wanton aggression and vandalism, as a focus for social frictions in numerous cities, although as I want to suggest, their violence is perceived as more symbolic than physical. Much like Mods and Rockers, the figure of the hipster is a highly mediated incarnation. Its proliferation can be linked to the circulation of the term on various music blogs and alternative weeklies, where it has taken on a new kind of currency. In the context of Montreal, the convenience of the hipster-as-folk-devil is that its spectral properties, mediated as they are, form an easy target that obscures larger problems having to do with Mile-End's recent economic upswing and the slow entrenchment of its subcultural custodians as

part of the area's new entrepreneurial class and its particular ethos of consumption.



The usefulness of "hipster" as an epithet in the context of Montreal carries with it a legacy that gives it some purchase among those who are "in the know." The hipster as characterizing a distinctly urban dilemma is not a new phenomenon; in fact, it can be traced back to the Beats and their disdain for those misguided individuals whose allegiance to Beat ideals were seen as inauthentic, spurious and faddish. We may well be aware of Norman Mailer's characterization of the moral radicalism of the hipster (Graña, 1990), but the etymology of "hipster" remains the subject of speculation. Ned Polsky (1967), speaking of the Beats, notes the following regarding the term "hip":

(All) are in the dark about 'hip.' The few Village beats with any opinion suppose that it comes from the 'hep' of early 1940s jivetaalk. Actually 'hep' and 'hip' are doublets; both come directly from a much earlier phrase, 'to be on the hip,' to be a devotee of opium smoking-during which activity one lies on one's hip. The phrase is obsolete, the activity obsolescent.... (Polsky, 1967: 149)

To be "hip," or "in the know," then remains a distinctive quality of the true Beat. A "hipster," initially a term that valorized the outsider, the outcast and the disenfranchised, soon emerged in the late 50s and early 60s as a term of disparagement, a way of demarcating the moral and ethical space of exclusivity the Beats were intent on mapping out. This urban cartography of cool was both spatial and social. Clubs, bars and scenes with the taint of the hipster would become *verboten*, sacral spaces and events sullied by the wrong class of outsiders whose appearance anticipated the inevitable absorption into a mainstream they had worked so hard to symbolically, materially and socially distance themselves from.

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**DIEHIPSTER.COM — FUCK THE HIPSTERS!**  
A place for real New Yorkers to vent about the invasion of attention starved, useless adults that we know as hipsters.

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**Fakelyn — Real Brooklynites VS The Hipsters in the NY Times**  
July 5, 2010 by diehipster



These links were posted in my comments section a few days ago and were also e-mailed to me by several people. So a couple of women from Brooklyn gave their opinion in a NY Times article about how Brooklyn just isn't Brooklyn anymore. How many parts of it are now inhabited by pretentious and smug phonies (hipsters and yuppies) just as I've been saying all along. The NY Times of course blocked my comment, which wasn't bad at all. I didn't curse and I simply gave an honest assessment of what Brooklyn is becoming. Although I did use the term "billy string armed wama-be's" once. Maybe they just don't like the name diehipster as they've gotten many trackbacks to their site from mine over the years and know we say it like it no cares. we've already figured out who the NY Times is starting to

**UP TO THE MINUTE HIPSTER BEATINGS.**  
Real Brooklynites Vs. Hipsters in the New York Times. —>  
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As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a hipster beater. 1 hour ago

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**The Great Hipster Exodus** August 1, 2008  
The Great Hipster Exodus: A Great Hipster Exodus — Comment 3, Member 0 6:00 pm

Q. Name three staples commonly mentioned in reference to the stereotypical hipster, i.e. things the hipster absolutely cannot live without.  
A. Overpriced cotton from American Apparel, an Arcade Fire CD, and the latest issue of Vice magazine.

Q. What do these three things have in common?  
A. They all started in Montreal.

Coincidence? I think not. This city seems to be a breeding ground for coolness. But the thing with Montrealers is that we don't care for recognition, we're happy being originators, but ultimately want to be left alone. A perfect example of this is the ardent backlash after the infamous Spin article of 2005 that put us on the map by declaring Montreal "The Next Big Thing" in music. Rather than being grateful for the acknowledgment and free publicity, local musicians complained about inaccuracies and omissions. Yes, it's just like us: so bloody die-hard in our about coolness that we would never even dream of selling out.

But what happens when Montrealers do decide to sell out? I'll tell you—they leave. Dave Chaznes, infamous porn and mainstream behind the American Apparel brand, left Montreal for L.A. The three founders of Vice packed their belongings, moved to Brooklyn, and went green. Does this imply that one has to leave Montreal in order to make it big because massive success cannot be found here? Not necessarily. The Arcade Fire are still locally-based and they are amazingly popular, almost infatigable. So why, then, are Montreal's top progeny are leaving in droves, a phenomenon I call the Great Hipster Exodus?

I can't say for sure, but I can tell you why I left. Yes, I too am guilty of leaving Montreal, in my case for the bright lights of New York City. I lived in Chelsea for a year and a half and only came home during the passport

**top posts**  
how many hipsters did it take to screw a hipster?  
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top ten songs that make hipsters want to die  
top ten songs to message a hipster to your bestfriend  
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hipster ads: effective genius based commercial born-again christian techniques  
a hipster playlist for all reasons  
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**Magnetique in Montreal**  
In a place like this, you can just feel it around you, see?

Rainbows in our Water supply Stuff Hipsters Don't Like

**Stuff Hipster Like Part 2**  
August 10, 2008

\*\*\* Hey, if you dig this post and are looking for hipster information, check out the main blog for some great insight in to this strange world we live in\*\*\*

I wrote a post a while back about stuff that hipsters like. Due to the popularity of the post, I think I will now try a sequel. I doubt this will turn in to a serial type thing, mostly because it gets kind of old.

Polaroid Film



This is fairly obvious, check out most any hipster Flickr account, or photo/party blog and you should see a fair spread of poor to extremely poor pictures of friends, celebrities and animals with human clothing. The allure of polaroids is much like the allure of vinyl. Even though there is a much quicker and easier way to take

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**HARPER'S MAGAZINE**

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**G-d damn hipsters**  
By Steven J. Weisz (Trans.)

From a prayer distributed in January 2004 by Hasidic Jews at a demonstration in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Between 1990 and 2000 the median monthly rent in the area increased by 67 percent, more than anywhere else in New York City. Williamsburg is reputed to be home to the highest density of artists in the world. Translated from the Hebrew by Steven J. Weisz.

For the Protection of Our City of Williamsburg From the Plague of the Artists

Master of the Universe, have mercy upon us and upon the borders of our village and do not allow the persecutions to come inside our home; please remove from upon us the plague of the artists, so that we shall not drown in evil waters, and so that they shall not come to our residence to rob it.

Please place in the hearts of the homeowners that they should not build, God forbid, for these people, and strengthen their hearts so that they can withstand this difficult test and so that they will not sell for the lure of money.

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**36 Hours in Montreal**



The Lachine Canal at the Old Port.  
BY ARIC CHEN  
Published: October 22, 2008

**MAKE** no mistake: visiting Montreal is not like going to Paris. True, the brooding facades and crooked streets of Old Montreal feel distinctly European, and yes, the locals take their French seriously. But don't confuse this cosmopolitan Canadian port city for a fusty, Old World

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### The Hipster in the Age of Online Ridicule

Posted by Zoh Pollock and Marty Finnegan - June 15, 2010



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### Hipsters

Wednesday, Jul. 28, 2010

By DAN FLETCHER

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New York hipsters participate in a water-balloon toss at McCamden Park in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Joshua Lott/Getty

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Hipsters are the friends who sneer when you cop to liking Coldplay. They're the people who wear T-shirts silk-screened with quotes from movies you've never heard of and the only ones in America who still think Peter Blue Dinklage is a good hero. They sport cowboy hats and berets and think Kanye West stole their sunglasses. Everything about them is exactly constructed to give off the vibe that they just don't care.

Amusing, yet, but harmless, right? Not to hear their critics tell it. Hipsters manage to attract a healthy amount of its intensity. Critics have described the loosely defined group as *snug, full of*

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The Rockist

### Hipster Hatred Knows No Bounds

By Michael Brett 24 July 2010

Last weekend, I made my journey to Hipster Nation's annual convention, the Pittsburgh Music Festival. I arrived with a fifth of gin, my bag chair, and an immediate dislike for many of my fellow attendees. I know they would need to share the space with me. But I wanted to let them know without any misunderstanding that their presence was nothing but a distraction.

How had things come to this point? Aren't rock festivals built on a foundation of... [read more](#)

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#### Why the hipster must die

A modest proposal to save New York cool by Christian Lorenzen

Has the hipster killed cool in New York? Did it do the way Anderson proved too precious for his own good, or was it when Chuck Sebring helped Vincent Gallo succeed? Did it vanish along with Koko's, International Bar and Tom's? Or when Mr. Sebring's moved shop to San Francisco and Bright Eyes signed a lease on the Lower East Side? Was it possible to be a hipster once a band that played Northwest one night was heard the next day on NPR's Weekend Update? Did it hurt to have American Apparel marketing soft-porn style to young bankers? Was something lost the day Esty made the cover of the Times Magazine? Or was it the day Bloomberg started sinking in bars? And how many times an hour could one check e-mail and still have an honest, or even ironic, claim on being cool?

Yes, the essence of cool still walk our streets. Any night of the week finds the East Village, the Lower East Side and Williamsburg teeming with youth—a pageant of the suburban undies. These hipster apoloists—now more likely to be brokers or lawyers than art-school dropouts—are the lords of the style pages, the darlings of real-estate marketers and the marks of predatory real-estate agents. And they must be buried for cool to be reborn.

It was in the real-estate section of one of the city's lesser dailies, under the headline

150 things to do on weekends

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Nonfiction

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### The end of the hipster

They've been parodied for their skinny jeans and cheap beer, but you might not have them to kick around for long

BY THOMAS BODDGE 7 Likes 976



Mention the word "hipster" these days, and a few things come to mind: Young, white go-somethings dressed in skinny jeans and lumberjack shirts, and wearing thick-rimmed glasses; neighborhoods like Williamsburg, in Brooklyn, and Silver Lake in Los Angeles; teen-fund kids; Chloë Sevigny; cocaine; ironic moustaches; and likely some mixture of contempt and hatred.

Of course, this is just the latest iteration of the term "hipster." Norman Mailer famously used the word to describe the middle-class whites who fetishized jazz culture in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, and in 1968 Jack Kerouac applied it to the members of the Beat Generation. For most of the twentieth century, it was used as a vague and usually pejorative term for a person with trendy, contrived interests.

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Will The Last Hipster Please Turn Out The Lights?

New York cool dies in thirteenth death. A satire.

By Zev Swann Published May 21, 2010

7 Comments Add Yours



"Even now, a part of me doesn't want to believe it." Gabriel Garcia Marquez is in between days of a cigarette he's just rolled on the roof of his apartment at the corner of Norfolk and Irvington streets. It's a gray afternoon in mid October—an afternoon scheduled to be his last in New York "for who knows how long." He pines five miles down into the heart of Manhattan's Lower East Side and sighs. This is the neighborhood for which the 25-year-old T-shirt designer/producer documentary filmmaker/vintage subway entrepreneur left the comfort of his parents' spouses duplex just over four years ago—long enough, he says, to watch it become totally boring.

He takes another drag.

"I was never like this. In 1999 and 2000, especially the spring of 2000, I'd come up here for a smoke, or to scribble, or paint, because the light can get really diffuse up here, and I'd look down toward Clinton Street and think, 'This is it. This is where it's going down.'" He smiles, remembering. "We might not have ever said it, you know, aloud, but we felt it. This place was... for real."

It was around that time that Garcia Marquez opened Pa, a small storefront on his block that sold vintage subway, from the forties and sixties. "We got a write-up in Paper, did a party with Cruiseiro, one of the Rappers DJ 'L I think. A few days later, Jason Schwartzman came in and bought a piece. Now gay."

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Where's the hipster douchebag places in Montreal?

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11/28/10 12:33 PM

Aerius Zeraton

1986 Member

So, I'm heading to Montreal with a few gents for a stag this weekend, and of the times I've been there for nights, I've only ventured around the downtown parts within the Centre-Ville/La Petite-City/La Ville-Marie.

I'm familiar with the hipster/douchebag places in Toronto (Dundas), but where are these places in Montreal? Are they far from downtown Montreal? I don't think the crowd I'm going with are big on places like Stereo or Soma (do they still exist). Parties are out of the question too.

I know that the thread may somehow classify me with the hipster/douchebags, and I am ready to take your job with my black plastic glasses and Smith G collection in tact.

Also, if anyone knows the name of the really good scotch bar east of Sherbrooke/Laurent, I'd love to find it again.

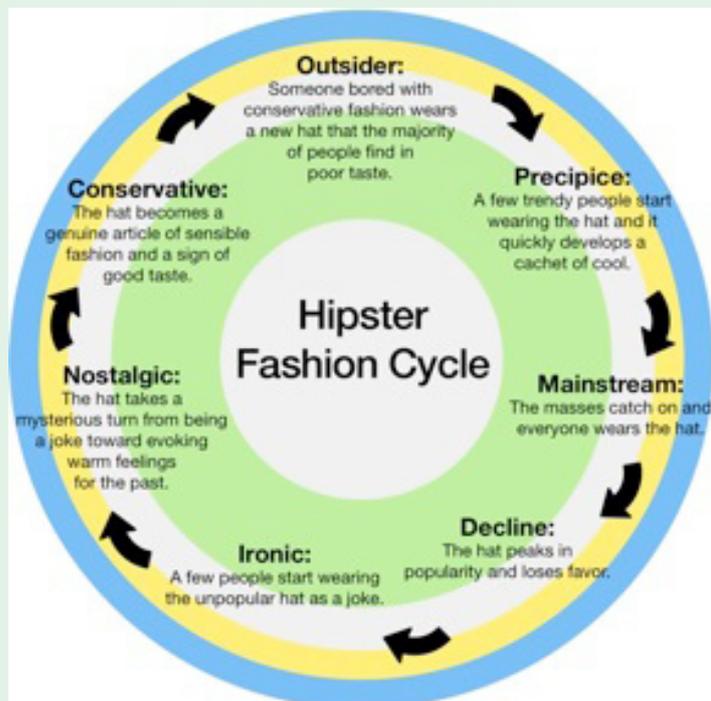
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Rajo

montreal as a whole is a hipster douche place

As other subcultural types soon took over the city, and we can think here of hippies and punks, the hipster soon receded into the background during the 60s and 70s in North America. Recently, however, the hipster has become resplendent, entering into debates and discussions on-line and in urban alternative weeklies. Websites such as *Time Out New York* (Lorentzen, 2007), *Popmatters* (Horning, 2009), *Adbusters* (Haddow, 2008), various print magazines and newspapers, alongside countless blogs, have all recently attempted to engage with the hipster as a symptom of the cooptation (yet again) of alternative culture by mainstream, middle-class youth. One way to characterize this newly resonate hipster is to understand it in terms of the absorption of cultural capital.



This narrative of incorporation/excorporation, which Dick Hebdige describes at length in his study of punk (1979), relies on the media, in ways which both disdain punks and later neutralize their threat, primarily through the commodification of their style and the ideological absorption back into dominant paradigms (the family, for example). The contemporary hipster suffers the same fate, but through new channels of circulation that in turn have mapped out, and mapped on to, a bohemian moral geography. Mailer's moral radicalism has been rendered a virtual caricature and translated into a distinctive global template, with specific iterations realized through local alternative media and on-line community forums.

Another way to consider the demonization of the hipster can be tied more explicitly to the shifting political economies of contemporary urban culture. Thus, the caricature of the hipster as threat can be understood not only in relation to its mediated, symbolic power, but can also be read as symptomatic of the changing face of the city. In this sense, the significance of the hipster as urban folk devil points towards considering their role in cities which have increasingly focused on the power of culture as a driver of the new symbolic economies. In a recent essay on the kinds of spaces found in Berlin, for example, sociologist Hartmut Häußermann talks about the city's culinary public spaces (2006). By this he means "the places of consumption, where the city can be perceived as an experience, places of self-projection and observation" (158). The logic of consumption of the post-industrial city reinvigorates imperatives which require being immersed in the culture of the city, where people have to be out and about, on the scene, affirming the value of its social and cultural life, for better or for worse. The cultural economies of cities, the rise of the term the "creative city," is but yet another way of framing

the long history of art versus commerce as played out in urban consumption. The hipster has erupted on the scene as its latest avatar.

Montreal has long been home to a plethora of culinary spaces; this is its mythical role in Canada. Elsewhere, I have written about Montreal's role in the national urban imaginary as an anglo-bohemia (2001), and the impact this had on the shape of its sociomusical experience. Bands at the time, including Godspeed You! Black Emperor, among others, worked hard to cultivate an image of Montreal that was infused with a certain mythos. They fed off of what sociologist Rolf Lindner (2007) has called a city's cultural textures, its "mythographies," which serve as a rich semiotic resource, a deep pool of literary, filmic, and musical texts and references that fostered a sense of a city deeply self-aware of its history as Canada's bohemian hub. The kind of ambience musicmakers in the 90s were seeking to cultivate was steeped in the city's long history as a subcultural epicentre in North America. This relies upon the city's cultural, linguistic and ethnic mix, an urban mosaic which has sedimented out from its vibrant jazz culture in the 1920s, its lively art scenes of the 1940s, its literary culture of the 1950s and 60s, its disco culture in the 70s, its 80s hardcore culture, through to the mid-90s, with its active comics culture, openmic poetry nights and a thriving indie scene. At the latter end of the twentieth century language issues, sovereignty debates and a long-term economic downturn, its notoriously cheap rent and the lowest tuition fees in North America were other important factors in shaping its bohemian ambience. It could be argued that Godspeed, and its attendant milieu, were caught in a sea change in the late nineties, and that their success, both locally and internationally, was a harbinger of the shift Montreal was soon to undergo. It was in the twilight years of the last century that the city became an idealized sanctuary for dozens of cultural refugees, most of whom had fled cities deemed too expensive and cultural voids (Toronto was a major point of exodus). The situation at the time created what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has referred to, speaking of Paris' literary bohemia in the nineteenth century, as a "proletaroid intelligenstia." By this he means the emergence of a class of educated individuals who have disavowed the financial imperatives of the dominant economy and instead have chosen to invest their cultural capital into creating and supporting a new field based around creativity and the arts. Fin de siecle Montreal bore many of these same attitudes. Montreal emerged at the time as a cultural hub, a city with nearly 20% unemployment, animated by French-English tensions, and a cultural life underpinned by four universities.

But that was then and this is now. Many of the people involved in the scene at the time have since settled into Mile-End as store-owners, running bars and cafés, have become parents, professionals, etc. If for the last decades of the twentieth century Montreal's economic failure provided the conditions for its *fin de siecle* cultural buoyancy, the upswing in its fortunes in the early twenty-first century established a different kind of framework for the city's imaginary. It can be suggested, in this light, that the anglo-bohemian of the 90s was perceived by many at the time, and certainly since, as a benign ambassador for Montreal's *laissez-faire* good life, while the seemingly more malignant hipster has lately come to represent the city, to itself and to the world, in a way that has made that member of the previous scene decidedly uneasy with the current state of Montreal subcultural life.

For some, the scourge of the Mile-End hipster was precipitated by a now infamous story about Montreal's music scene in 2005. *Spin* magazine did a cover story on a host of artists that made up the city's music scene at the time, including bands such as The Arcade Fire, The Dears, and others (Perez, 2005). As many of the more seasoned musicmakers suggested to me not long after the article was published, the story (while getting some of the geography of Montreal wrong) had

a strong impact on Montreal's cultural life, some of which was felt most acutely in Mile-End. Now, they told me, people were convinced they could come to Montreal and earn money through making music. One established record-label owner went so far as to suggest that the *Spin* story "really hurt" the scene in Montreal, with its false hope and empty promises of musical riches. This was their invitation to the Montreal scene, as hipsters soon became writ large on the Mile-End imaginary not long after its publication. The impact of the *Spin* article was both symbolic and demographic, as young people from across North America began to see the city as a beacon of musical and subcultural bounty. Combined with Montreal's resurgent economy, Mile-End for an established class of bohemians, like those I spoke to, was now becoming a victim of its success, where the marauding hipster hordes were seen as trampling an urban vision of subcultural modesty gently steeped in the romantic idyll of artistic suffering, unfolding in a milieu of easy-going ethnic pluralism, a view that has dominated Montreal's mythography for the latter half of the twentieth century. This new wave of visitor was perceived as made up of interlopers and strangers, defiling the history and image of Mile-End and the orderliness of its culinary spaces.

The stranger as urban trope has a well-established history. Georg Simmel was one of the first to articulate the stranger's role in the urban imaginary. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he wrote about the figure of the stranger as that kind of city type that calls attention to similarity and difference, nearness and distance, as uneasy, productive tensions that are distinctly urban in character. The spatial metaphor is an important one, and proximity and intimacy are aspects of life in the city that gives the stranger his or her resonance. Historically, the stranger, Simmel notes, has been tied to an entrepreneurial economy. New waves of immigrants must contend with their status as strangers, a constant negotiation of social, physical, and imaginary spaces, certain of which may be antagonistic and violent. In contemporary bohemian Mile-End, these tensions may engender acts of symbolic violence more often than not, mostly played out in the city's alternative weeklies and on-line forums, where hipsters are construed as villainous clones.

For example:

I live in Montreal, a city that has a whole borough devoted to hipsters, if you get trapped in Mile End past about 1am in the morning prepare yourself for an army of apathetic, skinny jeans kids clutching 40s (cheap malt liquor) with their lanky fingers. Although far too anemic to pose a serious threat to your safety, these monsters will ridicule your baggy jeans, laugh at your third generation iPod, and shit elitism all over your relatively innocent frame. They'll talk about how Devendra Banhart is the greatest musician of all time, smoke Native cigarettes, and rock more American Apparel than should be legally allowed on one person. (*Literary Facial*, August 1, 2008)

However, even as they figure into the Mile-End imaginary for some as figures of menace, sometimes this demonized hipster plays his or her part in providing the impetus for mapping out a neighbourhood ethos:

Next Monday, March 23, will be the last chance for Mile-Enders to sound off on what kind of Mile-End they want to live in. Is the 'hood-which will face a serious change when the ground breaks on the coming St-Viateur E. revitalization project-too hipster heavy? Too little? Not green enough? Well served by development and public transportation, or not? (*Montreal Mirror*, March 19, 2009)

Here, the hipster is listed as agenda item, flagged as just one city issue among many, part of a litany of concerns that may shape Mile-End for better or worse. In Mile-End, not only is the hipster demonized, but

has also entered the public sphere as something worthy of civic-minded consultation and debate.

In his or her role as an ambiguous urban trope, the hipster works as an inverted riff on what Simmel refers to as the "possibilities of commonness," whereby those opposed to hipsters develop framing and distancing strategies, simultaneously binding themselves together spatially, while also separating themselves rhetorically, socially and symbolically from the hipster. Of this kind of framing, Simmel says:

No matter how little these possibilities become real and how often we forget them, here and there, nevertheless, they thrust themselves between us like shadows, like a mist which escapes every word noted, but which must coagulate into a solid bodily form before it can be called jealousy. (Simmel, 1950: 407)

The hipster as the embodiment of envy is an easy surface reading as to why they figure in the way that they do. For those who dismiss the hipster, the *impossibility* of commonness is what has to be asserted here. In calling the hipster into being, and in giving it discursive shape such that it comes to represent the sort of consumption which seems out of the ordinary, extraordinary, needlessly ostentatious and remarkably homogenous (as many commentators suggest, they are often framed as wearing a certain uniform), the threat raised is one to an imagined gentility and restrained connoisseurship which otherwise characterizes the (proper) social life and dominant mode of consumption found in Mile-End, one which imagines living, working and creating in Mile-End to be oriented to the neighbourhood as a collective project. Simmel again:

People who have many common features often do one another worse or "wronger" wrong because the large area common to them has become a matter of course, and hence what is temporarily different, rather than what is common, determines their mutual positions. Mainly, however, they do it because there is only little that is different between them; hence even the slightest antagonism has a relative significance quite other than that between strangers... (Simmel, 1955: 44)

The hipster becomes an easily identifiable locus for anxieties about larger issues affecting Mile-End. For some, the inevitable trajectory of gentrification, moving from proletariat to immigrant to bohemian to bourgeois-bohemian, lurks not far beyond the figure of the hipster. Mile-End has played host to a range of communities (Jewish, Greek, Italian), but the hipster is read symptomatically of a new Mile-End, signalling a certain decline, a garishly-clad invading force (though not the first and certainly not the last). The hipster, too, is burdened with a semiotic weight that partakes of the stranger's valences, but remains unique in term of urban taxonomies. For unlike the stranger, which includes what those "Other" immigrant groups would have signified, and sometimes still signify as they have settled into Mile-End, the hipster is too intimately bound up in the subcultural life and ambience of the common space of Mile-End to function in the same capacity as the stranger, and is therefore deemed "wronger."

Beyond the stranger, elsewhere on-line discussions try to probe the ambiguity the figure of the Mile-End hipster engenders. Comments on the on-line site *Spacing Montreal* and the entertainment weekly *Montreal Mirror* say as much:

I really wonder where your odd obsession (sic) with "hipsters" comes from, especially as those are a transient group of people that will all be something else in 10 or 15 years. (*Spacing Montreal*, December 14, 2009)

Yeah, this is concerning the expression MILE-END HIPSTER. Earlier on, it was Plateau hipster. It's a little irritating, to put it mildly. I am not sure if it is the COFFEE BARISTAS or the Coffee Joes and

Coffee Janes who have invented that expression. But we who live here know that 35 per cent of those who live on the Plateau or in Mile-End are at, or under, existence minimum level—in other words, WELFARE PEOPLE. We don't think that you should censor the other brilliant types but, well, try to use that annoying expression a little less. Thanks a lot. (Anonymous, Montreal Rant Line, *Montreal Mirror*, November 16, 2006)

The hipster is both us and *not-quite* us, too close to call "Other," here just another urban type that signals demographic shifts, ambassadors for change, but of what sort remains unclear and it is this which causes the unease. Cast as such, the hipster fits, at once with fuzzy ambiguity and with vociferous certitude, into a local sociospatial hierarchy, structuring a pattern of belonging to, and in, Mile-End. This particular folk devil, and like the moral panics their kind have generated in the past, the hipster becomes an uneasy but productive vehicle for mapping out spatial and social strategies of distinction, articulating a neighbourhood/neighbourly ethos, which in the subcultural marketplace that Mile-End has become means that the scene here must adhere to a preferred logic of consumption. The culinary space of Mile-End, with its bagel shops, Polish delis, Greek, Brazilian and Chilean restaurants, second-hand clothing boutiques, and Italian social clubs cum cafés, many of which not only frequented by, but in some cases owned by that earlier generation of bohemians, has long provided a site for easy, modest and laid-back consumption, encouraging what Alan Blum (2003) has referred to as an ability to live a life of quality, which in turn has lent the area a certain quality of life. As those last readers comments suggest, the anxieties and concerns expressed through the circulation and consequent demonization of the hipster calls attention to the slow process of social sedimentation and cultural refinement that has been part and parcel of how Mile-End has become habitable for earlier generations of entrepreneurs, families and countless "Others" that came later. In the end, there is some irony attached to their role in Mile-End imaginary as catalyst for local reflection, foregrounding how neighbourhoods are valued and neighbourliness evaluated, used as a point of entry into an emergent civic debate about the area's past, present and future. In this capacity, there may yet be a use left for the hipster as modern day urban folk devil.

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